

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 2153

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN

SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

CNO WASHINGTON DC

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMIDEASTFBR

S E C R E T MANAMA 0625

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS : PFOR, BA

SUBJECT : MIDDLE EAST FORCE STATUS AND BAHRAIN/GULF POLICY

1. LATEST ISSUE WEEKLY BAHRAINI NEWSPAPER AL-ADHWA HAS EDITORIAL BY PUBLISHER COMMENTING ON BAHRAIN'S GULF POLICY BASED ON INTERVIEW WITH FOREIGN MINISTER. FOREIGN MINISTER REPORTEDLY STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF GULF STATES STUDYING REQUIREMENTS OF A COMMON DEFENSE STRATEGY, NOTING ZHAT BAHRAIN HAS NO PRETENSE TO BECOMING A LEADING INFLUENCE IN DEVELOPING THE UNITED KORATEGY BUT AT SAME TIME INTENDS FULLY TO COOPERATE WITH IT AND NOT TO BE CONSIDERED A "CHESS PIECE" MOVED AT WILL BY "SUPER POWERS".

2. ACCORDING AL-MARDI, FOREIGN MINISTER IN INTERVIEW RAISED ISSUE OF U.S. NAVY FACILITIES IN BAHRAIN, VOWING THAT WHILE GOB DOES NOT CONSIDER U.S. NAVY'S USE OF FACILITIES HERE AS SIGNIFICANT, IT IS COMMITTED TO TERMINATE U.S. NAVY'S USE OF FACILITIES IF THE UNITED STRATEGY OF THE GULF STATES REQUIRES

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THIS.

3. COMMENT: IN RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND OTHER MINISTERS ON PROTRACTED DELAY IN CONCLUDING MIDDLE EAST FORCE NEGOTIATIONS THEY HAVE FROM TIME TO TIME MADE

QUITE VEILED REFERENCES TO A POSSIBLE "TIME LIMIT" ON CONTINUED U.S. NAVY PRESENCE. IN TRYING TO EXPLAIN GOB'S ALMOST INEXPLICABLE HESITATION TO CONCLUDE NEGOTIATIONS, IDEA SUGGESTS ITSELF THAT GOB IS CONSIDERING ADOPTING A POSITION OF "PASSING THE BUCK" RESPONSIBILITY FOR U.S. NAVY PRESENCE. CONCEIVABLE BAHRAIN STRATEGY WOULD BE TO SEEK TO PURSUADE NEIGHBORS THAT, IF IT HAS TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE TWO, IT PREFERS PARTICIPATION IN A GULF SECURITY ARRANGEMENT TO CONTINUED U.S. PRESENCE IN GULF, THAT IT IS PREPARED TO TERMINATE NAVY PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN IF THE COMMON GULF SECURITY STRATEGY REQUIRES THIS, AND THAT IT IS ONLY WAITING ON THE EVOLUTION OF SUCH A COMMON STRATEGY BEFORE ORDERING THE U.S. NAVY OUT. WE BELIEVE GOB HAS REASON TO BE CONFIDENT THAT SHOULD IT TAKE SUCH A POSITION IT CAN PERMIT THE U.S. NAVY TO STAY HERE FOR A LONG, LONG TIME WHILE WAITING FOR ITS LARGER NEIGHBORS TO AGREE FORMALLY ON A COMMON GULF DEFENSE STRATEGY.
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